

STAT

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC

4701 WILLARD AVENUE, CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20015 656-4068

FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM ABC World News Tonight

STATION WJLA TV
ABC Network

DATE October 28, 1981 7:00 PM CITY Washington, DC

SUBJECT American Involvement in Nicaragua

FRANK REYNOLDS: Tonight in the second of his Special Assignment series, William Sherman reports on allegations of past American involvement in Nicaragua.

WILLIAM SHERMAN: Nicaragua, 1978. Government troops, locked in a war with leftist rebels. Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza pleads with the Carter Administration for military help. The United States refuses, citing Somoza's record of human rights violations.

But fighting alongside Somoza's troops there were American Special Forces experts. Michael Echanis, the leader, decorated Vietnam veteran, former Defense Department instructor in guerilla warfare. Joseph Camp, retired from 17 years as a Navy commando, veteran of CIA-controlled missions in Southeast Asia.

JOSEPH CAMP: I'm quite confident that US government agencies followed presidential orders. And, therefore, if there were any activities which were embargoed by the United States government, they must have been conducted outside the framework of US policy by the individuals themselves.

SHERMAN: The CIA won't comment on the Echanis operation. The Army officially dismisses it as a private mercenary deal. But an ABC News investigation reveals that the Echanis team was operating with the knowledge and the tacit approval of a CIA agent and at least two high ranking US Army officers.

For example, Echanis reported intelligence information to Lt. Col. Charles Beckwith, then head of the Ft. Bragg special warfare school. Now retired, Beckwith confirms those findings.